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CHOOSING THE HEADLINES

TUCKED away in a small paragraph in the newspapers at the beginning of the year was the information that during 1958 the world population increased by 47,000,000. There are doubts whether in the present year world food production can catch up with this increase. In any case, it will be touch and go. During the next 40 years, that is, within the active span of life of the rising generation, world population will double. Food production may or may not keep pace with the increase. In Asiatic countries there is going to be a continuous race between population increase and possible famine. In terms of the future of the human race nothing outside the possibility of nuclear warfare is as important as this.

It is almost impossible for Western peoples imaginatively to regard it as important. In Britain, for instance, the emphasis in politics during the greater part of the forty years is to be upon doubling the standard of living. Britain and other favoured countries are to be islands of material prosperity in a world sea of possible desperation. The facts of this situation are not even generally guessed at, let alone known.

Not a Mist

With solemn and justified pride the Russians have sent their rocket off into orbit around the sun. It is an extraordinary effort. Some of the indirect effects may be the feeding of the new world population. But as contrasted with the coming social and spiritual conditions of the new world, sending a satellite in orbit around the sun is a child-like effort. It is fairly safe to say that within the next fifty years a revolution in the history of mankind will take place that will make comparatively incidental all previous revolutions. It is hard to anticipate this or prepare for it. But it assuredly awaits all men everywhere. Nothing of this, not even a hint of it, appears in headline news, or, for that matter, hardly in news at all. In face of the future it may be surmised that most men are sleep-walking.

To point this out is not pessimism or anticipating the worst. But it is to point to a basic fact of religion. Life will be possible in the obvious social convulsions of the future according to the capacity men will have to let in the light of spiritual perception into their lives. This has little or nothing to do with what is usually called goodness. Men can be good, and uplifted when with national pride they send off their atomic weapons to outer space. Indeed, there is a kind of goodness or national morality that

is very estimable in itself but has precious little to do with living in the world coming into being before men's eyes.

A New Preparation

Most ideas that men live by now are likely to be shaken in the future. How, for instance, can the ordinary, decent Englishman, intent upon his decent career, and the decent expectation for his family, adjust himself in very truth to the life of the Asiatic peasant? He will have to. His English decencies will not be enough. Somewhere, everything he normally lives by will have to be shaken so that he will be able to live at all.

Beneath all his conventional beliefs some new shattering belief will have to be found so that he finds himself in intimate and perhaps troubled communion with men on the other side of the globe. This means religion, not merely good feeling, or even conventional religious practice, but a preparation of the spirit that allows new emotions and new visions of what life is for to break through.

Against this particular religious need, the current religious perceptions are not enough. The historic conventional religions do not control the situation. They repeat the needs found in past historic situations. The Christian religion came alive as an incarnation of God within certain realities of human situations. They have departed. New situations are here. A new incarnation has to take place in a new world never dreamed of before. Individual men everywhere are finding themselves face to face with spiritual problems never known within human experience. Everywhere, individual lives are breaking against ideas and human relationships that are entirely new in history. Only by a new link between man's spirit and the spirit of God can the unknown be brought within the compass of man's truth. This is the religious challenge of the present.

"No"

The Unitarian interpretation of religion tries to meet this challenge. It says "No" to orthodoxy, because orthodoxies do not seem to apprehend the mighty changes of spirit that are taking place. This "No" is not a negative—as is so frequently charged—it arises out of faith. And this faith is clear enough. There is a religious truth to be found which men can serve with all their hearts and souls without having to turn their backs upon the living situations within a living world. This faith judges the headlines and frequently finds them wanting.

VISITING UNITARIANS IN ALASKA

By Phillip Hewett

(Minister of the Vancouver Unitarian Church, Canada.)

HOW would you like to go to Alaska? "When the proposition was laid before me a few months ago, it sounded too exciting to resist. I had been aware that there were several isolated Unitarian groups in this vast land to the far north-west of Canada, but apart from this had no idea of what might lie beyond the mountains and glaciers.

The tour I was invited to make was primarily for the purpose of giving a lecture at the University of Alaska, under the auspices of the Billings lectureship of the American Unitarian Association. It was also arranged that, while in the North, I should visit three of the four Unitarian fellowships which had come into being in Alaska during the past few years. These groups are normally dependent upon their own resources alone, since Unitarian visitors are naturally few in this isolated location.

Alaska was acquired by the United States through purchase from the Russians in 1867, and after nearly a century with the status of a territory has now become America's forty-ninth state. Because of the constitutional processes involved, the elections there took place several weeks later than those in the remainder of the United States, so to my surprise I found on my arrival in the country during the last week in November that I was to see the closing days of a hard-fought election campaign, in which a number of the local Unitarians were actively involved.

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The thermometer read 12 degrees above zero as we stepped off the plane into the snow at Whitehorse, capital of Canada's Yukon territory. At Fairbanks, the first stop in Alaska, it read 12 below zero, and it was to fall to 35 below during my stay there. Fairbanks is within 120 miles of the Arctic Circle. The combination of the onset of wintry weather with the closing days of an election campaign hardly provided the most propitious setting for Unitarian meetings, but the response was none the less good. I found the University of Alaska, at which I spoke on "Collapsing Traditions and Creative Opportunities", to be a small institution located a few miles from Fairbanks, at a place with the appropriate name of College. The student body now numbers about 700, and the curriculum leans heavily towards the applied sciences, though the liberal arts side is now being more fully developed. It has an excellent museum of local history, with exhibits ranging from hairy mammoths to contemporary Eskimo and Indian work.

If the original inhabitants of the country were interesting, those who have settled there more recently are no less so. The cult of conformity, so pronounced in many areas of North America today, has not yet succeeded in making many inroads upon Alaskan life. Most of the people who are there went because they wanted to get away from conventional mediocrity elsewhere, and to be individuals with their own ideas and their own way of doing things. Alaska therefore provides a surprisingly fertile soil for the growth of Unitarianism, though the Unitarian groups are as yet small, as the total population is small.

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In Fairbanks, despite recent growth and the presence of large military installations nearby, the spirit of the old North lives on. With its warmth of friendship and sturdy independence of mind, this spirit is closely akin to that of Unitarians, so it was hardly surprising that the Unitarians there were eagerly looking forward to the time when they would have a real church, though their membership has yet to reach fifty. We held a church service on the Sunday I was there, with a good attendance (helped by the fact that the thermometer had shot up to zero, which felt quite warm after the cold spell!). The congregation represented a score of different occupations, though drawing to a considerable extent on teachers at

the college and other professional people, together with officers from the nearby Air Force base.

From Fairbanks I travelled on the Sunday afternoon to Anchorage, arriving there in time for a service in the evening. An alteration in the airline schedules meant that, to my regret, I had to miss seeing the dog-team trials in the afternoon. The flight into the sunset (3.30 p.m. in November) took us past Mount McKinley, the highest peak on the North American continent. Anchorage is a bustling community of some 65,000 persons at the head of Cook Inlet, named after the great eighteenth-century explorer of this coast. The Unitarians meet in a small hall belonging to a radio station, and it was packed to its capacity of about a hundred. After the service we adjourned to the home of the chairman of the fellowship, a man who immigrated a few years ago from Holland, and is familiar with the liberal religious movements in that country. There the discussion of ideas and organizational problems went on until 2 a.m.

The Unitarians of Anchorage, like so many other Alaskans, have great plans. They have bought a substantial tract of land, with the idea of putting up a church building as soon as possible. This order of procedure differs from that at Fairbanks, where the fellowship has no immediate prospect of having a building of its own, but is at present involved in plans for a part-time ministry. A Unitarian from California, who left the Methodist ministry a few years ago on theological grounds and took up teaching, has now come to the city with the prospect of dividing his time between teaching and building up a Unitarian congregation.

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My last stop in Alaska was at Juneau, the capital. It is a much smaller town than the others I visited, and quite different in appearance. Whereas the cities further north spread out as though they had unlimited space for expansion—as, in fact, they have—Juneau is built on a steep slope between mountains and sea. The buildings are, therefore, crowded together and the streets are narrow, steep and winding. I was reminded strongly of some of the older towns in England. The climate is quite mild, but very wet. Fog and low cloud are frequent, and since the only regular service in and out is by air, one can sometimes get stranded there for days at a stretch. I was fortunate in that respect.

It was election day when I arrived in Juneau, but in spite of this and of the fact that one of the leading members was a candidate for office (he was elected), we had a good meeting in the evening. The Unitarian group meets regularly on Sunday mornings and runs a small Sunday school. The meeting place is one of the pleasantest rooms for such a purpose that I have seen anywhere, with windows looking out over the sea to the mountains beyond. Attendance is small, usually no more than a dozen, but they use recorded music, sometimes recorded sermons, sometimes printed or mimeographed material, which one of the members reads. I got the impression of a group determined to survive and expand, despite the limited opportunities offered by the size and character of the town.

The following morning I was taken to see the Mendenhall glacier, a few miles north of Juneau, and one of the few glaciers anywhere which can be reached by road. As elsewhere, the recession of the glacier in recent years was very marked, showing the extent to which the north is slowly warming up. On the way back we stopped at a new Presbyterian church, built of logs, the traditional material of the area, to a very satisfying design. Although it was so new, it fitted perfectly into its surroundings and seemed as if it had been there for centuries. The end wall facing the congregation was of glass, apart from a large log cross, and the view beyond took in a lake surrounded by forest, with the glacier and mountains beyond. The most tedious sermon would be tolerable in such a place!

The flight back to Vancouver in the afternoon would itself have made the whole journey worth while. It was a clear and sunny day, and the sweeping panoramas of mountains, glaciers, fjords, and islands, first along the Alaskan coast and then along that of British Columbia, was breath-taking in its

beauty. The sun went down in a blaze of crimson splendour behind the Olympic mountains to the west as a huge orange moon appeared from behind the snow-clad cone of Mount Baker to the east, to provide a fitting climax and conclusion to the journey.

THE TWO STREAMS OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY

By Colin Gibson

(Minister of the Adelaide Unitarian Church, Australia.)

Two streams converge to form the Christian river, and the waters of both streams contribute to its benevolent and civilizing power. One rises in the thought of God, and has its source in the depths of the human spirit, where God dwells. It is a spring which is ever fresh and ever new, which never runs dry even in the days of drought, but from which it is always possible to draw the water of life. Whenever man goes to God for his help and comfort, and finds refreshment and true strength, he is adding to the healthful, life-giving waters of this stream. Let us call it the theistic faith of Christianity, the belief in God which a man must have if he is to retain faith in man, and keep that faith as it should be, pure and unalloyed. All religions which have beautified the life of man have been fed at this source. It is what we call God, and mean by it, that deeper sense we all have, stronger at some times than others, of a value and a purpose in living, which imparts to this life from somewhere we know not, a worth and excellence. It is something we all have, because there is not anyone, being human, that has not felt, whether under the stars at night or in a sunlit scene, an uplifting of the spirit and an outgoing of his being towards something.

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Or if love of nature does not fill him, he will awake to the love of somebody, which adds to the value of life many thousandfold, and gives an unbounded joy. Or, if it is not nature or the love of a human being, it will be the pursuit of some desirable object, which will lift him out of himself and win his devotion, a love of country perhaps, or of some cause or creed which represents to him what we should call God. The man who has never had a feeling of this kind in his life can truly be said never to have lived at all. It is some such sense of life-giving worth and value which is the first of the two streams of Unitarian Christianity. The feature of it is that it is a product of man's spirit and not of the world about him. It is a perception he possesses, a standard by which he judges all he sees, a love by which he is captivated. It is contact with God in some shape or form, and therefore theistic. The conscious awareness of God, the religious sense, is what comes to us when we have been completely taken out of ourselves, and realize how wonderful, how glorious it all is; or what comes to us when we have discovered, through pain and sorrow, how deep the meaning in life lies, and have forsaken self. The ways to God are many, but the roads of the spirit lead there, and show us what there is in life.

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That is the first stream, the second, which we may call the humanist, arises in a happy and absorbing interest in life as it is lived, without a thought of anything else than it. The pursuit of science, and the discovery of worlds upon worlds of knowledge is a source of endless delight to the mind and spirit of man. As one discovery succeeds another, he is completely immersed in this world of his being and does not want to look anywhere else for the wonder of it. All his inspiration seems to come to him from the object of his search and study. When the charm of nature takes hold of him, he thinks it is nothing more than the world itself which he loves, and is just content to enjoy it. He may perhaps be moved to express his feelings, but he would never say it was God.

And if he were in love with a person or pursuit, he would think that it was out of the bosom of existence itself that this

feeling arose, and he would be much moved by it, but he would not admit it to be an outside power or presence. He is simply caught up in the absorbing pursuit of life and learning, and lets the light of knowledge stream in upon his soul, with a joy in it all which he would say was just human. Or if the miseries of life afflict him, he will bear them unconquered and unafraid, bloody and unbowed. This is what we may call the humanist approach to living. It is the second of the two streams which make up the river of religion.

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It is a very good thing to see these streams combined, to behold all lovely and familiar things in the love and light of divinity, and to see the beauty and joy of life as being so lovely in itself as to need no addition to it. This world is so wonderfully one that there is no division between the divine and human except in the way of experiencing. God is in all things, and all things in God. We need not shun the word God because we think a man is most a man when he is most himself. Nor need we be afraid of the greatness of man, lest the glory of God should be diminished by exalting him. God is never so clearly or truly seen as in the mirror of man's spirit. There is a fault in religion which separates God from man, and makes him less than God-like in nature and capacity, and there is a fault in the man-centred outlook which wants to keep God out, as if it took from the value of what is there. The point is this: the value which is to be found in life is a value which can equally well be said to be given to life. Communion with God in the Spirit, the calling of Him a person by the word Thou, is not praying to God somewhere outside His world, but in the inmost experience inside oneself. It is simply a matter of the approach, where we come by one or the other of the two convergent streams which combine to make religion a real thing, by the theistic or the humanist way. Surely the river is richer which includes both than the streams separately, for by themselves they prove inadequate, and produce a sense of want and lack of relevance. There is bound to be a difference of emphasis, but we can still combine to make one river, to the common enrichment. There is only one real requirement of any Church, that it shall be as deep as it is broad and answer the soul's need. It should equip for life by giving a new faith, hope, and love. It should make man at home and happy in his world.

From My Journal

By "Simplicius"

WE have loosely attached to us one of the feckless families of the world. It is a tradition that the left-over sandwiches and the uneaten cakes from church teas go to the B's. Their many children keep up our Sunday School average, if spasmodically, and anything at the jumble sale suitable for any one of them finds its way to them by under-the-counter means. At one period or another, members of the congregation have made attempts to employ Mr. B. and between her babies Mrs. B. "does for" one or another of the congregation. I was discussing her latest distress with Mrs. T. tonight and hoping she could give them a helping hand. "I'll do what I can this time, Mr. S.", she said as she showed me out. "but there are limits to human charity". Indeed, I thought somewhat ruefully as I turned out of her gate, that is where it differs from Divine charity.

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I think I am never more conscious of our congregational fellowship than when our party of Union delegates and friends settles down in an empty carriage, as we did tonight, to pass our homeward journey in comment upon the afternoon's proceedings. In the manner of the good old unitarian tasters, Y. always settles the preacher first. Today we had heard one of our younger brethren, and I confess that I myself had wished he had trained under my old Principal. His often repeated words are always with me when I read through a new sermon. "Gentlemen", he would say, "if you are

over-proud of an original and daring illustration, cut it out. It may demonstrate your mental agility, but it is not likely to reflect the deep things of God". Y. said much the same thing in his own forthright manner, as the train stopped and started at all the little stations back to Redville. "That young man thinks too much of how clever he is, playing to the gallery like that—which, by the way, was empty! I didn't pay six and seven return to be told I am a 'sale bargain'." When the laughter had subsided, I tried to show Y. the mistake our young preacher had made. He had begun his sermon with the idea of catching attention, and intoned, "Bargain sales, birthday sales, white sales, remnant sales... ah, remnants!" and so launched into his theme of the faithful remnant who keep our churches open. Only he had the wrong kind of remnant! Y. had good reason to resent the implication of being left over and sold off! I smoothed over this somewhat unfortunate criticism of my colleague by telling Y. the kind of remnant he is, and the illustration that my good friend should have chosen. "You Y.", I said, "are one of the remnants that in the drizzle and the dusk still stands on the touchline raising a cheer, when all the rest of the supporters' club have gone home to their hot teas". Whereupon, someone rubbed the steam off the window and announced we had passed the gas works. "Now then, Redville supporters", said Y., as he reached for his cap. "You know what happens after these jaunts. No making this afternoon do for service tomorrow. I expect you all present. Don't leave it to 'The Remnant', mind!"

IT OCCURRED TO ME

By Muriel Hilton

THE other day whilst on the railway station I looked over some books that were being sold off at prices well below cost price. One in a rich purple jacket caught my attention, and then the title, "Fabulous Foods for People You Love". There was no fable about such impressive facts as taking a dozen ripe peaches, a pint of cream and innumerable eggs for certain sweet dishes, not to mention lobsters, oysters and such luxuries as preliminaries, and though one could understand that there had not been many editions of the book, the idea that inspired it has a great appeal. Much can be expressed in the preparation and serving of food, and some of the most delightful occasions in one's life have been the sharing of meals with dear-loved people. One can so easily discern the care and thought of the hostess, just as one can swiftly detect the lack of care; one very soon knows that the hostess enjoys cooking or looks upon it merely as one of those chores that have to be done. I enjoy the remembrances of good meals on holiday, or on those occasions when one is "taken out", but those which are most memorable have been prepared with loving hands in the home. A friend who is an artist in such matters, a woman with wide and varied interests, calls these meals "love feasts", and that is just what they are. Symbolically speaking, it is love that turns life's common water into wine, and though on occasions of feasting the food is far from ordinary, it is still love that illumines the meal.

With the advent of mechanical entertainment in the home, hospitality is much less frequent than it was years ago. Women who do a job and a half, or even two jobs, have much less time for entertaining, and yet something very deep and personal is going from social life. There is a tremendous satisfaction in preparing "love feasts" as there is in the participating of them. "To say it with food" is a way in Winifred Holtby's words "of helping to show that life is a lovely thing".

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Many people ruin their lives and other people's by romantic day-dreaming and fantasies of the past and future; they are spiritually hollow when called to face living in the here and now to the best of their ability. One of the most momentous incidents in my experience of theatre-going is in the play "Flowering Cherry". Cherry, dreaming interminably of the happiness that would be his if only he could buy his

orchards, is given the opportunity to realize his dreams by his wife. This is the climax. His dreams could be made into a reality, but confronted by this fulfillment, he starts to make excuses for taking the opportunity, he sheers away from responsibility and shuffles into his old habits of fantasy again.

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The following quotation from Evelyn Underhill's diary, written when she was seventeen and quoted by Richard Church in his review of "Evelyn Underhill", by Margaret Cropper, is of great interest.

"As to religion, I don't quite know, except that I believe in a God, and think it is better to love and help the poor people round me than to go on saying that I love an abstract Spirit whom I have never seen. If I can do both, all the better, but it is best to begin with the nearest. I do not think anything is gained by being orthodox, and a great deal of the beauty and sweetness of things is lost by being bigoted and dogmatic. If we are to see God at all, it must be through nature and our fellow-men. Science holds a lamp up to heaven, not down to the churches."

THE LIVERPOOL DOMESTIC MISSION

By J. Keir Marven

(On January 17 the rebuilt Domestic Mission in Liverpool will be opened.)

THE Chapel of the Domestic Mission is to be reopened and rededicated on Saturday, January 17. This will bring to an end stage one of a total task involving the whole of the premises. This Mission is one of the last of the war-time casualties to be put right.

The Sunday in 1939 after the mass evacuation of the children of Liverpool took place, the life of the Domestic Mission could well have come to an end. Nearly a dozen Sunday School teachers turned up, but less than half a dozen scholars, instead of the usual large crowd. To the everlasting credit of those teachers they decided to carry on. The authorities were in occupation of the premises except the Chapel, and the few mid-week activities were carried on in a little place half a mile away. In what Liverpool calls the "May Blitz" of 1941 the Mission Chapel was burned down, fortunately leaving the walls and the organ intact. Thus the break with Mill Street was complete until 1945.

Slowly, children and young people began to drift back, and by 1945 a Sunday School of nearly one hundred had been gathered. There was a mid-week club, and there were the beginnings of a choir. There were Scouts and Guides and a Mothers' Meeting and Evening Worship. The strength was limited but the faith in the future was such that the parent committee was led to make an act of faith in the future by returning to the Mill Street buildings as soon as they were available. The Chapel received temporary repairs, about a third of the club rooms were decorated and a new Minister was appointed.

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There was no feverish rush into activity. We tried to get the feel of the situation. Worship in the Chapel was not easy for it was barn-like except that there was no warm hay. In other ways the cause began to flourish. Clubs and groups expanded until an assistant was needed. A social worker was found and the development continued. Meanwhile, the few who had held on in the dark days continued to give their single-minded devotion to various aspects of the cause they had undoubtedly saved. A pattern of activities, providing something for everyone, began to emerge.

The religious problem is how to expand on non-sectarian lines, how to meet the social and secular needs of the community, winning the goodwill of other churches and yet maintain a clear witness to the values of religion. No answer which involves making Unitarians, or judging the work by counting worshippers will bring anyone nearer to the Mission.

though it is true that many have "caught" Unitarianism at the Mission. The only answer is that the spirit of the Mission is true religion. Religion here is implicit not explicit. Only with a tremendous faith in our hearts can we really attempt the tasks that face us.

The story of the last five years and the efforts of the Mission Society Committee to get the Chapel rebuilt is hard to relate, for delay and frustration have been the rule not the exception. At long last the task has been finished, though we have not yet raised the money to finish the payment. We shall hardly feel that the Chapel is ours until we have. The restored building will be a credit to the denomination, simple and dignified.

Though I have tried to give a little of the background of the reopening of our Chapel I know I have still not said what the Domestic Mission is. There are about twenty clubs, there are several hundred children, young people, adults and old people. Even in our present weak state, we have more than forty voluntary helpers. We are trying to be a family church and community centre which will be an instrument for good in this area of Liverpool. We hope that other groups and churches will join with us in serving our neighbourhood.

DR. ALFRED HALL

DR. ALFRED HALL, who died on December 18, aged 85, at Dunham Road Parsonage, Altrincham, Cheshire, after a long illness, leaves a great gap in the ranks of distinguished Unitarians. Born at Boston, Lincolnshire, the son of a mariner much respected in the town, Alfred Hall won a Parry Scholarship to Boston Grammar School, and after a few years' experience in a local ironmongery business, entered the Unitarian Home Missionary College, Manchester, taking his arts degree at Owen's College. With a Tate Scholarship he went on to Manchester College, Oxford, one of a generation of students who left a considerable mark on the Unitarian ministry. After a year at Berlin University as Hibbert Scholar, he settled for his first ministry, a very happy one, at the Octagon Chapel, Norwich. Here he married Amy, the eldest daughter of John Sudbery, of London. After Norwich, where he was responsible for collecting funds for building the Martineau Hall, for which he made a nation-wide appeal, he served at the Church of the Divine Unity, Newcastle upon Tyne, for ten years.

His longest and most important ministry was at Upper Chapel, Sheffield, from 1918 to 1939. Here he made an impact on the life of the city, being three times Lord Mayor's Chaplain, and serving on many committees in the Education and other services. During this ministry he was one of those responsible for the formation of the General Assembly in 1928, and was the preacher at the inaugural service at Manchester in 1929. He was already known in the U.S.A., having been one of the visiting "team" of British preachers to that country who exchanged with an American team to mark the Centenary of both the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and the American Unitarian Association. Dr. Hall helped to develop the young Assembly in the early thirties, and carried through the collection of the "Church Fellowship Fund" for church maintenance and development. As in his Norwich days, he once more approached Unitarians all over the country to produce funds, and was asked to serve as President of the Assembly for a second year in order to have full scope for completing his scheme—the only president to have held a second year of office. Following this honour came his election to the Presidency of the International Association for Religious Freedom, one of the busiest periods of a busy life, during which he travelled again to America, receiving the degree of D.D. from Mendville Divinity School, and travelled several times to the Continent, visiting Holland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Roumania, a country in which travel was not always safe enough to be perfectly pleasant at that time.

By the year 1939, Dr. Hall felt that a less exacting ministry would be advisable, and left Sheffield, much to the sorrow of all Unitarians in the district, for Lincoln, where he gave new life to a Unitarian cause which had had many

vicissitudes, attracting many by his preaching, assiduous in Sunday School work, and maintaining a well-supported discussion circle throughout the war period, when the chapel became known to many Servicemen stationed in Lincolnshire camps.

He was anxious to complete 50 years of active ministry before retiring, but Mrs. Hall's health broke down a year too soon, and they went to live with the Rev. Arthur W. and Mrs. Vallance at Altrincham in 1949. He preached on far more Sundays than not, often twice a Sunday, helped neighbouring congregations without a minister, was active in the local United Nations Association, wrote many Press articles, and a book entitled, "God is One Person", which has not been published.

His services both to the Unitarian College, Manchester, and to Manchester College, Oxford, have been notable, and he served both as visitor, holding this office at M.C.O. for over thirty years. He was President of Manchester College from 1945 to 1948.

The funeral service at Dunham Road Chapel, Altrincham, was conducted by Dr. Hall's old friend, the Rev. Stanley Monop, and the address was given by the Rev. A. B. Downing, of Dean Row and Styal, who came into Unitarianism through Dr. Hall's Sheffield ministry, and who also took the committal at Manchester Crematorium.

Correspondence

Letters should be addressed to the Editor, "The Inquirer", 14 Gordon Square, London, W.C. 1. They should not in general exceed three to four hundred words in length.

Spiritualism — Virgin Birth

Sir.—If Mr. Crabtree will look up my original article on *The Communion of Saints*, which started this controversy on Spiritualism, he will see that far from believing that human life is just "a striving and an ending in nothing", I am just as much a convinced believer in an after-life as he is. But I would still contend that Spiritualism is far more likely to undermine than to support an intelligent faith in immortality. I am at a loss to understand why intelligent people should consider that the strange phenomena of Spiritualism furnish an "objective verification" of immortality. It may sound impressive to pour scorn on those who believe "that reality is exhausted by normal sense perception", but so far as I am aware, the things which happen at Spiritualist stances can only be observed, like everything else, by sense perception. Any validity which the phenomena may or may not have obviously depends on the interpretation placed upon the phenomena, and as Dr. Starbuck points out, the Spiritualist interpretation is not the only one by any means.

In any case, have we any right to seek for a verification of spiritual truth, other than the verification of pragmatic empiricism? "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign."

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Dr. Tindall is, of course, quite correct when he states that the Hebrew *almah* could mean "virgin"—just as the English expression "young woman" could imply a virgin. This is why some later commentators and translators came to regard Isaiah vii. 14 as implying a virgin birth. But if the prophet had meant "virgin" he would have used the normal Hebrew word for "virgin"—which is *betulah* and not *almah*. The significance of the "sign" offered by Isaiah lay in the faith of the young woman, reflected in the name which she was to give her baby—"God with Us"—and there was no suggestion that the actual birth was to be in any sense miraculous.

But since, as Dr. Tindall admits, the passage cannot possibly refer to Jesus (King Ahaz is unlikely to have been convinced by something not due to happen for 700 years!), the whole matter is obviously one of purely academic interest.—Yours,

Salmon.

Arthur I. Long.

"The New World"

Sir.—Thank you for the leading article in the current issue of *The Inquirer*. We need the vision about the whole meaning of life, but as long as mankind inhabits the earth, we shall need charity

also, especially in its deepest and truest sense, as spoken of by Jesus. For surely that spirit of charity will give us the faith and hope to strive for the New World we envisage. Even the giving of the haves to the have-nots is still of great importance, spiritually and mentally, as well as materially. We live from day to day and only by this giving will immediate and very urgent needs be met. We give materially to relieve suffering refugees, victims of war and ignorance in many parts of the world. Parents and teachers give of their minds so that children may grow into whole persons. Ministers give of their spiritual resources to their sorrow-stricken or perplexed people. Men and women in all walks of life will always seek to give to others who do not possess what they themselves have at the time. It is part of God's great gift of charity to man, and springs from compassion rooted deep in the human soul.

In our own country now, the ugly shadow of unemployment grows longer.

This, one feels, is the natural result of government by a policy based on wrong principles, giving to ordinary people the same inadequate principles by which to live, and agitation continues in every section of the community for "better" social standards, many of which are completely unnecessary to health of mind and body, and which simply cannot be afforded. People kill themselves for cars and television sets, entertainment and expensive schools for their children. One can be so happy with simple things.

The folks in Northern Ireland seem to know a thing or two about organizing ministers' stipends. It would be interesting to know whether all the ministers in Northern Ireland receive the same full stipend according to length of service.

I do not know anything about the Swansea Church, but I know a little of the background of this area. It seems a pity that Mr. Lewis should make such a scathing remark on account of something which is reputed to exist. One cannot know all the facts, and even endowments do not justify a lack of caution, either on the part of a congregation or of a prospective minister.—Yours,
Rotherham. *Jessie Phillips.*

The Religion of a Scientist

Sir,—Your excellent editorial, "Note to a Scientist," would seem, from your first sentence, to have been inspired by the recent Reith Lectures. It would not, therefore, perhaps be out of place to add the comment that Professor Lovell, as a postscript to his last lecture, gave his personal viewpoint, a viewpoint which is not dissimilar to your own.

Three passages, in particular, are I think significant: "On the question of the creation of the primeval material of the universe, it seems to me unlikely that there can ever be a scientific description, whether in terms of the evolutionary or steady-state theories."

"If I were pressed on this problem of creation, I would say, therefore, that any cosmology must eventually move over into metaphysics for reasons which are inherent in modern scientific theory."

"... I am no more surprised or distressed at the limitation of science when faced with this great problem of creation than I am at the limitation of the spectroscopist in describing the radiance of the sunset or the theory of counterpoint in describing the beauty of a figure."

The Professor stressed that his view was a personal one and that some of his colleagues would not be prepared to accept such a limit to scientific knowledge. But we may be grateful that there are some leading scientists who do not accept the view of the modern materialist that the scientific method is the only approach to truth, or that science can teach us the whole truth about the universe. Such a dogmatism I believe we should oppose as much as those which say that the whole of truth can be contained in one sacred book or taught by one church.—Yours,
London, N.W. *J. Robbins.*

Christmas Views

Sir,—I wish *The Inquirer* would not adopt the view that Christmas and Easter are the two seasons of the year when Unitarians must be resolved to prove their nonconformity.

The article on "The Christmas Story and the Modern Man" thoroughly depressed me until I hit upon the idea of making it the subject of a Christmas sermon at Ditchling on Sunday, December 21. Does Unitarianism insist that we must ride roughshod over all the traditions which our fellow Christians hold dear?

Have we no responsibility for placing an imaginative construction on symbols? Do we need to have everything measured by scientific formulae, and are not spiritual things and things of the mind too much a matter of personal experience to be measured by impersonal scientific data?

Of course, no one except a few crude, uninspiring minds believe in Angels, if by Angels we mean social ladies with flowing

robes and feathery wings, but we can conceive the voice of God as the Angel Messenger, and men and women in all ages have heard that voice. Is it too much to believe that the voice of God in some revealing manner could be heard by the Shepherds abiding in the field? Then why should our carols recording the incident be antiquated?

Really, if we go on subtracting, we shall reach the stage where we are renowned not for what we do believe, but for what we disbelieve.—Yours,
Hastocks, Sussex. *Ernest Green.*

[*The Inquirer* has adopted no view. The articles were written by representative Unitarian ministers. We judge they will be much surprised by Dr. Green's interpretation of their views.—EDITOR.]

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Bolton

On Sunday, December 21, a special Christmas Service was held at Halliwell Road Free Church, Bolton. The service had been specially devised by the minister, the Rev. K. Wright, and the Young People's League of the church, and included a short dramatic act of worship, written for the occasion in the style of the mediæval nativity plays, but incorporating a modern Christmas poem, "Journey of the Magi", by T. S. Eliot. Special music was sung by the Young People's Choir, the organist being Mr. John Ratcliffe. The occasion also saw the re-introduction, after a lapse of many years, of a small, fully-robed boys' choir.

Newcastle

The spirit of Christmas truly manifested itself at the Annual Christmas Tree and Toy Service on Sunday, December 14, when the congregation showed concern for the forgotten children of Newcastle upon Tyne by taking gifts of toys which were afterwards distributed with the help of the Chief Inspector of the NSPCC. It is doubtful if any service can be more moving than this and the happiness given in homes where Father Christmas does not often call adds gladness to the Christmas of the giver. The service was preceded by carol singing by members of the U.Y.P.L.

An act of worship in the form of a Nativity Play, written and presented by members of the U.Y.P.L. and Sunday School, took place on Sunday evening, December 21.

Conference

The Foy Society invites young people (18-35) to attend their conference at Llandudno next Easter, March 26-30. Theme: "Alternatives to War". For further details please write to: Martin Fieldhouse, Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

Engagement

Joan Smith—The engagement is announced between Edward, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Jones, of Stalybridge, Cheshire, and Sheila, daughter of Mrs. E. M. Smith, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, and the late Rev. E. W. Smith.

Death

Harding—On January 5, at Cadres, The Way, Reigate, Dura, wife of Frederick C. Harding, and daughter of the late Rev. W. G. Cadman.

Theodore Flower Mills

On December 8, 1958, after a long illness, Miss Mills passed away in the Lyppatt Lane Nursing Home where she had been for some months. Friends gathered at the Bayhill Unitarian Church for her funeral service, conducted at Miss Mills' request by the Rev. Barbara Thomas, followed by committal at Chesham Crematorium.

It was characteristic of Miss Mills that all the arrangements for her funeral service were made by herself. Here was an outstanding personality, and her influence was felt both in Unitarian circles and in society at large, far beyond the house she was born and lived in, "Lowmendale", of Lockhampton.

Besides her novels and poetry, besides her painting and her love of gardening, Miss Mills devoted her life to her church and to expressing her beliefs in society. Perhaps the period of her life she most enjoyed was the fifteen years that she was Secretary of the Women's Suffrage Society in Chesham. The town was largely hostile to her work and at last once escaped to an anti-suffrage riot. She took part in the great London procession and visited Holloway for the International Women's Suffrage Alliance.

She fought pain and disability for many years, until in these past few years her indomitable will was all that was left. It is this that will always be remembered.

IMQ.

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Sir,—The Lindsey Press has in active preparation an illustrated booklet on the story of our headquarters, old and new. Can anyone lend me photographs of the large hall and small hall in the old building—quickly, please.—Yours,

1-6 Essex Street, London, W.C.2.

Martimer Rowe.

Reprints—

Reprints of Sunday Express article, "The Church That Says We Agree To Differ", are available, 10s. 6d. per hundred copies, post free. Unitarian Information, 1-6 Essex Street, London, W.C.2

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Miscellaneous

A HOLIDAY for two or three weeks is offered at Champney House, Pembury Road, Tunbridge Wells, by John E. Champney's Trust. The House is endowed by the Trust so that the charge is reduced to 4j guineas a week. Teachers, Nurses, Ministers of Religion, Social Workers, and other persons in active life, especially younger people, are invited to apply for particulars to the Warden at the above address.

Many Unitarians have been or are vegetarians. Information on this way of living, free from slaughter and its associations, gladly sent to others interested. Free literature on request from Secretary, London Vegetarian Society, 53 Markon Road, Kensington, London, W.8.

Florence Macne

The death of Florence Macne has taken from us a noble character, rare and fine and may we not say, peculiar to this island, as are our hills and dales, our trees and flowers.

She was the first Headmistress of a new High School for Girls founded in Calverton Park, Liverpool, a new school with traditions unfurnished in a difficult and certain age. And near the end of her long service there came a Second World War when the school was moved temporarily to the borders of Wales, with all the worry and anxiety which this involved. And yet through all this previous commitment, the school prospered under the influence of her character.

And from that school, as the years passed, there went out a continuous succession of girls of sound training, and high character, who brought honour to the school, honour to the country and honour to her who provided everywhere open event.

And these girls returned again and again to greet their Head, and to express by their coming their undying loyalty to her and their undiminished love of the school she created.

Whence came the power for this noble work? Florence Macne would have answered without hesitation—"from my religion". During the ministry of the Rev. Lawrence Radford, she became associated with Ullet Road Church, and served it with outstanding devotion through all the years. And when her day of retirement came and she moved to Brindley, she devoted her time and her spiritual gifts to the welfare of the Old Meeting House, in that little Essex village. Simple in her taste, she loved beautiful things in nature and in art, and was extravagant only in travelling to seek them out.

She died in Liverpool, amid the sights and sounds of her active life. The funeral service in Ullet Road Church was conducted by the Rev. E. Basil Short, and there was a large congregation of friends and colleagues, old girls and staff of the school, who gathered at the river side to say farewell to a great spirit.

L.R.